

**King County Agriculture Commission
Minutes from October 13, 2005
Issaquah Salmon Hatchery
Issaquah, WA**

Commissioners Present: Judy Duff, Bob Tidball, Ben Kodama, Grant Davidson, Nancy Hutto, Ewing Stringfellow, Dick Gradwohl, Michael Blakely

Commissioners Absent: Gaylia Bullock, Roger Calhoun, George Irwin

Staff: Steve Evans, Judy Herring, Claire Dyckman, King County (KC) Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD) Agriculture Programs

Guest Agency Staff: Josh Monahan, King Conservation District (KCD); Todd Murray, Washington State University Extension (WSU) KC.

Guests: Steve Keller, Dairyman, Snoqualmie Valley; Judy Taylor, Sheep Farmer, Middle Green

Judy Duff called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes: The Commission approved the minutes of the August 11th and September 8th meetings.

Commission Roundabout:

A group of senior citizens visited Dick Gradwohl's farm, loved his enterprise, and told stories of their farms. Dick encourages us to pursue such opportunities.

Bob Tidball voiced his concern about the wording of the arguments used by the County to justify selling the FPP parcel to the City of Kent in lieu of forcing condemnation by the City. He would like to see a better set of for any new FPP parcels that would reduce the likelihood of the use of condemnation on FPP parcels.

Nancy Hutto noted that the Senate has approved the Hatch Act which now goes to a conference committee.

Ben Kodama attended an introductory session of an education committee where the facilitator wanted to know what an Ag Commissioner was.

Judy Duff attended the Puyallup Fair where she saw George Irwin's livestock. She was heartened to see the information handed out by farmers.

Commission Business:

Staff Report: Steve Evans reported on five items:

- Commission Elections: George Irwin reported that Nancy Hutto was the only Commissioner interested in the Chair position, though Ewing Stringfellow and Grant Davidson had not been contacted. He noted that Edmond Murray might be a potential candidate as a new Commissioner.
- Farm Bill Session: The nearest Farm Listening Session for the federal Farm Bill will be October 25th, 1-4 p.m., in Portland Oregon at the Portland State Office Building.
- Climate Change Conference: This will be October 27th, all day, at the Quest Field Conference Center. A third Commissioner could join Bob Tidball and Michelle Blakely in a pre-paid position.

- Ag Program Staff: The Ag Program has lost two strong supporters: Eric Nelson, former lead of the Ag Program left the County for full time work at his dairy; Jerry Balcom, Section Manager for the Ag Program retired. Kathy Creahan replaced Eric Nelson as the program lead for agriculture; Bill Eckel is acting in Jerry Balcom's position as manager of the Office of Rural and Resource Programs.
- Sammamish APD Rezone: The Sammamish APD Rezone of "Rural" Lands passed out of the Committee as proposed: 33 acres containing Gold Creek Park and the large church will be taken out of the APD. Remaining acreage on those parcels and all other parcels under consideration will remain in the APD. Council will hold a hearing and vote Monday, Oct . Commissioners raised concerns to which Steve responded:
Why did they need 33 acres (parking).
Would the dual zoning result in the back parcel be landlocked if the parcels were split? (Steve didn't think this was legal, access would continue.)
Did this solution meet the business needs that the landowners had been presented to the Commission. (The landowners have accepted this solution. Grant Davidson noted the parking needed for both the church and the exercise facilities at Gold Creek.
Would Gold Creek pay taxes?

Judy Herring reported on two items:

- Agricultural Drainage Assistance Program (ADAP): The major accomplishment for construction season of 05 was the extensive project conducted on Mullen Slough and its tributaries. Smith Brothers has reported their land is drier. From a fisheries standpoint, the amount of oxygen has increased and temperatures have decreased. This project entailed the experimental cutting of reed canary grass both by hand and with mechanical equipment, neither of which required a permit. There will now be planting where needed to shade reed canary grass. Concern was expressed about the potential for willows to clog creeks. It was clarified that some species of willow did not expand into the water as some others do. The Commission expressed a desire to have a presentation on ADAP at a later meeting.
- Muth/Polygon property: The Commission had written to the Executive and council expressing their concerns regarding the proposed condemnation of this property. As a result of the Commission's letter, a Striking Amendment was introduced which a) expressed the uniqueness of this case; b) emphasized the open space attribute of the property and c) stated this should not be considered as setting a precedent. The Executive supported the Striking Amendment. A second striking amendment was added by Council, allowing the County to use the funds received to purchase lands not only in the Lower Green APD but in any APD in the Green River Basin. The issue would be at Council in late October or early November. Several Commissioners expressed concern at the reason for the condemnation and the language in the amendment, and would like to pursue how to prevent similar actions to those of Polygon from occurring with farmlands in the future.

Agency Reports:

King Conservation District (KCD) Josh Monaghan reported on four items:

- KCD Livestock Classes: The next series begins at the KCD office in Renton on October 28th.

- Biodiesel on the Farm: A workshop will be held at Saturday November 5, 2005, 9am – Noon Oxbow Farm – 10819 Carnation – Duvall Road NE, Carnation
- Behavioral Management Workshop: Dr. Fred Provenza at Utah State University will give a workshop on behavioral management class and livestock diet at a date to be announced in May.
- Wildlife Poster: The KCD is close to finishing a poster on wildlife and farms.
- Dairy Digester: The proposal for a digester on the Enumclaw Plateau has changed from being a regional project to a smaller pilot project.

Washington State University (WSU) Extension: Todd reported on five items and provided a handout:

- Food Sense: The kick off events were very successful. Elementary students, teachers and parents met with farmers at Full Circle and Fall City Farm.
- Western Washington Horticultural Association Conference (WWHA): Folks are encouraged to sign up early for the January 4th and 5th event at the Sea-Tac Marriot - the agenda has been completed.
- Harvest Celebration: Approximately 5,000 people participated. Funding for next year's event is in question.
- Cherry Bark Tortrix (CBT): Three years of research is completed and WSU will soon be able to recommend nematodes as a sound treatment option for CBT.
- Wireworm Survey: A survey on wireworms has been completed and a WSU report will be available on the internet. The WWHA Conference will host a session on field assessment and wireworm management.
- Small Farm Expo: This will include sessions on Land Use 101, Manure Composting, Sheep and Goat, Farm Equipment, Small Business Management and Value-Added Enterprises.
- Composted Livestock Manure: A workshop will be held at Marymoor Park on October 29.
- Cheese-Making Workshop: A workshop limited to 12 people will be held in Jefferson County in late January with Peter Dixon, Dixon Dairy Foods Consulting, of Vermont.

Public Comment:

Judy Taylor will try to attend the Council hearing on the Sammamish APD rezone. Her concern is that the Executive's compromise will allow more development.

Steve Keller, a dairyman in the Snoqualmie, asked for the Commission's help with a land-use enforcement action that would go to the hearing examiner on October 18th. He is being cited for a 1998 remodel of his barn without a permit - raising the roof, altering its slope, and installing gutters to improve runoff management, and altering the footprint - and for having two travel trailers for farm employees. His perspective is that historically, roofs have been raised without a permit. He is in a sensitive area. He has not been able to talk personally with anyone at DDES. He does not know who turned him in, but is concerned it was for political reasons. Judy Duff suggested discussion of this situation be put into New Business.

New Business

Request for Approval to Transfer Funds: Judy Herring sent an October 4th letter to the Commission requesting permission to transfer \$30,000 from an account currently targeting the

Green River APD to acquire development rights on the next top priority farm in the Snoqualmie. Discussion ensued.

Motion: Moved and seconded that the transfer be conducted. Motion Passed.

Bob noted that this topic again raises the question of not continuing to put new monies into the former FPP "Bond" fund, because there is a need to change the conditions for use of those "bonds".

Keller Case: The Commission discussed how they could address a permit or an enforcement case. Recognizing that they had only heard from Mr. Keller, it would be best to postpone discussion until more information was available. However, the hearing was in three business days. Noting that it was the role of the Commissioners to hear from constituents who come with their emergencies, and their role to advise the Executive and Council, they decided that they could express the concerns raised by the case.

Motion: Moved and seconded a) that a letter be sent to the Executive and Council expressing concern that the case be handled understanding that we want to keep dairies, and concern on the generic issues - the process of the enforcement case; the improved conditions for water and manure management; that this was not a new building; and that farmers meet the needs for working housing however they can; and b) that a Commissioner attend the hearing if possible. Motion passed. Dick Gradwohl indicated he would try to attend the hearing if possible. Kathy Lambert and David Irons were to be cc'd.

Rural Economic Report: Julia Larson reported that the draft would be released on October 31 and sent to the Commissioners for review. There would be 2-3 weeks for comment, before the document went through County Council by December 31. The agricultural section is the largest, an indication that she has been listening! Topics include those raised by agricultural interests: worker housing, both temporary and affordable; regulations regarding home occupations; lack of infrastructure; slaughter operations for grass-fed beef. Commissioners emphasized that they hoped to see recommendations to address value-added items on farms, worker housing, a definition of the seasonal labor force increase in health department hazard fees; codification of activities into high cost temporary use permits. It was asked if she could address state Department of Labor and Industry costs for laborers - a rate that is the highest in the country.

Commission Recruitment: The Chair suggested that elections and full discussion of recruitment be postponed until the by-laws and the terms of existing Commissioners were clarified. Discussion began however. Commissioners raised issues of how to recruit Hmong and youth, and began suggesting some names for commissioner candidates. Steve Evans noted that there was a process for appointing Commissioners, including interviews and the submission of names to the Executive and to Council. People should not informally invite people as though the position is a certainty. Commissioners were to call Claire to clarify their terms, and to read the by-laws sent by staff prior to the next meeting.

Creative Options for Preserving Agricultural Acreage: The chair presented the issue that in a discussion between her and Ewing Stringfellow, she recognized a need to address how agricultural lands outside the APD could be replaced when they faced condemnation or purchase for other uses, especially by the County. Can creative options be sought? In the case of the Stringfellows, the County would buy some of their land for a bridge. Rather than accept a check,

reducing farm acreage and the ability of kids to farm, might funds instead go to acquiring a nearby piece of farmland? Bob Tidball noted that we need an option such as this because the County will be buying farmland outside the APD's for mitigation for a variety of projects.

Motion: Moved and seconded that we recommend that the County extend the concept of no net loss of farmlands outside the APD, asking that the County seek to replace the farmland when it condemns or purchases farmland acreage.

Options for this will be discussed at another meeting.

Eric Nelson Acknowledgement: The Commission wanted a letter sent to the Executive and Council acknowledging the good work of Eric Nelson.